

# Section 10

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With Oliver as scribe, Joseph began translating in the Book of Mosiah, where he and Martin had left off before losing the manuscript. As they made progress toward the end of the book, Joseph worried about the lost beginning. Should he translate it again?

No, the Lord answered in section 10, along with instructions about how to proceed, an omniscient explanation for this answer, and assurance that nothing vital was lost with the manuscript.<sup>1</sup>

The Lord described in detail a conspiracy against Joseph and the Book of Mormon. He said much about Satan’s attributes and tactics as he described the actions of the “servants of Satan” who “uphold his work” (D&C 10:5). Satan inspired conspirators to steal the manuscript from Martin, the Lord explained. They were waiting to see if Joseph published the same manuscript. If so, they would alter the stolen manuscript and claim he had no gift. If not, they would publish the stolen manuscript and claim Joseph had no gift. They would steal and lie for the glory of the world and destroy Joseph in the process. But the Lord clued Joseph in to the conspiracy and helped him thwart it.

The Lord cautioned Joseph not to reveal his knowledge of the conspiracy until the Book of Mormon was translated. He could not always tell whom to trust. With that

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<sup>1</sup> “[Revelation, Spring 1829 \[D&C 10\]](#),” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020.

caution, the Lord revealed to Joseph that the Book of Mormon plates contained a backup copy of what was lost. “Remember,” the Lord said, “it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi” (D&C 10:39). Joseph should therefore translate the small plates of Nephi until he got to the reign of King Benjamin. The conspirators only stole a translation of part of Mormon’s abridgment of Nephi’s writing. Publishing the translation of Nephi’s own small plates would derail the conspiracy, demonstrating in the process that God’s “wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (v. 43).

The last part of the revelation explained what the Lord planned to do with Christianity, which he affectionately called “my church” (D&C 10:55). By calling Joseph Smith and keeping promises made to the Book of Mormon engravers to bring forth their words, the Lord was building his church, not destroying it. True Christians did not need to fear. They would inherit God’s kingdom. It was those who “build up churches unto themselves to get gain” whom the Lord promised to disturb (vv. 55–56).

Once translated, the Book of Mormon would do this work. It would corroborate the doctrine Joseph had received from the Lord, who would use the Book of Mormon to establish his gospel and minimize the contention over doctrine that Satan stirs among those who twist the scriptures and do not understand them. The Lord will gather those who choose to believe his doctrine as a hen gathers her chicks. He will not coerce. If they will come of their own will, they may partake freely of the living water he offers. What is his doctrine? All who repent and come to Christ are his church. Those who preach their own doctrine are not his church. Christ establishes his church on rock, safe from hell, if Christians endure in his doctrine.

Section 10 gives us Christ's embracing view of Christianity. It was revealed well before the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ. With this revelation, we should understand the restoration of the Church to be the redemption of all of Christianity.

Section 10 illustrates that God is both omniscient and benevolent. Where Satan uses his influence to blind, to enslave, and to deceive, the Lord uses his power to bless, to save, and to preserve our agency. Theologians have long wrestled with the assumption that if God is all-knowing, there can be no such thing as individual agency. The whole script of human action must have been predetermined, this assumption goes, and therefore we have no power to stray from it. One alternative is to believe in a less-than-omniscient God. Section 10 presents a refreshing alternative. The Lord showed

how he used his foreknowledge to preserve and protect individual agency and keep his promises.

The Lord promised the Book of Mormon engravers that their descendants would receive their writings. He called fallible free agents, Joseph Smith and Martin Harris, to bring to pass that promise. Joseph and Martin chose to disregard the Lord's will and lost the manuscript as a result. Could God keep his promise to the Lehite prophets and still allow Joseph and Martin freedom to obey or disobey his commands?

Section 10 answers yes and illustrates how. Knowing that Joseph and Martin might choose to disobey him and that, if so, Satan would likely seize that opportunity to undermine the Book of Mormon's power to bring souls to Christ, the Lord commanded Nephi to prepare alternative plates without his knowing exactly why (1 Nephi 9). Nearly a thousand years later, the Lord commanded Mormon to include those plates with his edition of the others. "I do not know all things," Mormon wrote about that, "but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore he worketh in me to do according to his will: (Words of Mormon 1:7).

Joseph and Martin did not have to disobey the Lord, but now, in case they did, the Lord could keep his promise without compromising their agency. How many permutations are in the intricate plan of salvation? How many backups has the Lord prepared? Who knows? Only an omniscient God could truthfully assure us in such certain terms that "the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (D&C 3:1). Section 10 not only restates that guarantee but shows how God fulfills it. The Lord could have told Joseph what to do with a few words: "Don't retranslate the part you lost." To our delight, however, the Lord uses section 10 to show, not just tell. "I will *show* unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43, emphasis added).

Joseph relied on section 10 to write the preface to the original edition of the Book of Mormon. Imagine the conspirators' disappointment when they opened the book and found their whole plot exposed.